THE

Person of Quality's ANSWER TO Mr. COLLIER'S LETTER,

BEING A

DISSWASIVE FROM THE PLAY-HOUSE.

In which are Inserted the Apologies of a Young Lady, and Young Gentleman, in behalf of the Ladies and Gentlemen who frequent the Play-House.

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THE

Perſon of Quality's

ANSWER

TO

Mr. COLLIER's LETTER, &c.

Dear Doctor,

Lincolns-Inn-Fields, Jan. the 27th.

THIS Afternoon, I received your Edifying, Evangelical Diſſwaſive; for which, What thanks can I return you? What recompence can be ſufficient? May he, for whoſe ſake you did it, amply Reward you.

I had conceived indeed a Zealous concern at the Diſorders of the Play-Houſe, I lamented its having ſo much the aſcendant of the Town, and the Countenance of Figure and Fortune. And I too juſtly preſaged that theſe Nurſeries of Licenſe and Atheiſm, eſpecially that in our Neighbourhood, wou'd if unreſtrain'd, prove fatal to the Nation; make us Ripe for Deſtruction, and pull down ſome terrible Vengeance on our Heads; no leſs than Popery, or Arbitrary Power at the leaſt, and dear Doctor, What a Day, and what a ſight wou'd that be to you and me?

For this Reaſon I reſolved that in my Family, Reformation and the Year ſhould begin together, and for that Reaſon I called them together as ſoon as they had dined to Day; determining to Read a long and a ſolemn Lecture out of your ſhort view to them; but a ſtrange fatality had happened, for ſome audacious Rats had ſo prophanely gnawn it, that it was no longer legible, a detachment in my Conſcience of Play-Houſe Vermin, whom the Devil had enter'd into for that purpoſe, at his Congregation in the Neighbourhood.

Thus bilk'd of my Homily, I thought I muſt to my great Grief, have been forced to diſmiſs my Flock. For I perceived they were grown *frightfully Nice and Impatient, and were reſolved to be cur'd extempore or not at all.*

But then it was that in an auſpicious Moment, arriv'd your ſhort, but Divine Diſſwaſive. I read it over as it were in a Breath, while they all the while ſtood gaping to entertain it. But the laſt incomparable Paragraph but one, I pronounc'd with a more Emphatical Voice; Laid before them with all the Energy of my Lungs, *the ſad inſtance of God's Judgment in the Terrible Tempeſt, when we were almoſt ſwept into Chaos,* when Nature *ſeem'd to be in her laſt Agony, and the World ſeem'd ready to expire.* And what occaſion ſaid I to my gaping Audience, to have recourſe to Tragedies, when thoſe Rants, that Fuſtian, and that Bombaſt, with which deluded Mortals, are now a days ſo tickled, are engagingly inſerted into our very Diſſwaſives?

And here Doctor I made two Remarks to them, upon the Judgment of the late Dreadful Tempeſt. For firſt ſaid I, the outcries of the Play-Houſe practices are ſo Aggravating, ſo Horrible, that the Divine Vengeance which they brought down upon us, has involv'd the very Innocent. Not only the Poor Inhabitants of *Cologn*, but the very

very *Hamburghers* and *Dantzichers*, and all the People of the *Baltick*, have ſuffer'd for the Enormities of our *Engliſh* Theatres; tho' I believe in my Conſcience they never ſo much as heard of a Play, and know no more the difference between a Tragedy and Comedy, than they do the diſtance between the Earth and Saturn; ſo that, ſaid I, you may obſerve from hence, 'tis not enough to keep away from theſe lewd Entertainments; but you muſt endeavour with all your might to ſuppreſs the Conventicles of Satan.

The ſecond Obſervation that I made was this, that we have reaſon to be thankful to Heaven, for forbearing us ſo long. For if the late Dreadful Judgment had happen'd in the Reign of King *Charles* the Second, when the Play-Houſes were Licentious in all their Impunity, when Reformation was ſo far from being thought of, that the very name was deſpiſed and laugh'd at. What muſt the diſmal Conſequence not have been? Then we ſhould certainly have been ſwallow'd up; ſince the *Judgment* was ſo terrible even the other Day, after a five Years Reformation?

What reaſon have we to be thankful, that we live in an Age in which Light is come into the World. For in what *Ægyptian* darkneſs have we liv'd hitherto? And what a poor Reformation was that which was carried on in Queen *Elizabeth*'s time, in Compariſon of that which you are glorioufly projecting? For with that former Reformation the Play-Houſe began; grew up and ſpread and flouriſh'd. What a ſhadow of a Reformation was that? 'Tis true Popery was driven out, and wholſome Laws were Enacted to ſecure the Rights of the Pople. But what ſignified all that when the Play-Houſe was encourag'd? For tho' as you learnedly obſerve, Play-Houſes, in the Reign of that Great Queen, were not permitted to be erected in the Liberties of the City, yet in the Subburbs they were not only permitted but encourag'd with a Vengeance; and by whom

encourag'd? Why not only by the People, but by the Court, nay, by the Council, yes by thoſe poor deluded Wretches, *Cecil* and *Walſingham*, who believ'd it to be the buſineſs of forſooth Wiſe States-Men, to provide Honeſt and Reaſonable Diverſions for the People; and at the ſame time were ſo infatuated, ſo intoxicated, as to believe the Entertainments of the Theatre, not only to be Honeſt and Reaſonable, but the only Honeſt and Reaſonable Diverſions.

Nay the poor miſtaken Queen her ſelf, encouraged Play-Houſes to that degree, that ſhe not only commanded *Shakeſpear*, to write the Comedy of the *Merry Wives*, and to write it in Ten Days time; ſo eager was ſhe for the wicked Diverſion; but ev'n with that Hand that weilded the Scepter deſcended poorly to Tranſlate a Play that was writ by a *Grecian* Poet. She had read it ſeems of ſome Great Men among the *Romans*, who had ſhewn the way; As *Julius Cæſar* had writ *Adraſtus*, *Auguſtus Ajax*, *Gracchus Thyeſtes*, and *Mecenas Octavia*, and ſhe wanted Judgment, alas poor Woman, to diſtinguiſh between the obligations of a Heathen and a Chriſtian. 'Tis true ſhe was Wiſe enough in ſome things, ſhe kept out Popery and Arbitrary Power, ſhe defended us from *Rome* and *Spain*, by the meer Force of her Prudence. But what ſignified that, you know Doctor, when ſhe encourag'd the Play-Houſes, and wanted fore-ſight in that particular, to preſage that theſe Nurſeries of Vice and Atheiſm would prove fatal to the Nation?

It ſeems ſome Fools about her had told her, that at a time when Taxes were frequent and grievous, ſome honeſt Diverſions would comfort the People, but that it would be unreaſonable to deprive them at once of their Money, and of their Pleaſure too; this ſhe had been told, and ſhe like an eaſie Woman believ'd it. But what amazes me moſt is this Doctor, that not only that Queen and her Council encouraged Plays, but not ſo much as one of the Famous Prelates

lates in her time ſaid ſo much as a word againſt them. 'Tis true, the State-Men defended us againſt *Spain* very vigorouſly, and very effectually, and ſo did the Church-Men againſt the *Roman* See; but alas their poor and narrow Spirits contented themſelves with that. But not ſo much as one word was ſaid againſt the Abominations of the Play-Houſes. There were Reformers indeed! Were they ſo ſenſleſs that they wanted diſcernment to ſee the *flaming and outragious wickedneſs* of them? Or ſo very wicked that they wanted Zeal to diſcharge their Duty in the ſuppreſſing it? Ah my dear Doctor, Had you but liv'd in thoſe Times, you would have taught that Queen her Leſſon, in Loyal Libels have told her her Duty, affronted her Authority, defam'd her Servants, and boldly have told her that ſhe Countenanc'd them only to Debauch her People. You would have open'd the Eyes of thoſe Fools, who believ'd *Shakeſpear* to be Inſtructive as well as Innocent. You would have extracted more *Smutt* from his Comedies, than a Chimney does from Seacoal. And what Prophaneneſs and Blaſphemy had you not found in his Tragedies? You would have ſatisfied both Queen and Council, and Clergy too, that their buſineſs was to ſuppreſs the Play-Houſes, and to let *Spain* and *Rome* alone. That the Danger that they were in was not from *Philip* the Second, and *Sixtus* the Fifth; but from Tyrants who had been many a Year defunct from *Julius Cæſar* and *Macbeth*; you would have *preſaged* the Storm that the latter would have pull'd down upon the Nation, a Hundred Years after 'twas writ. You had then been *Hiſtrio Maſtix* the firſt, whereas you are now but the ſecond of that glorious Name; and then had old Bungling *Pryn* been cropt for preſuming to Copy you. Thus, my dear Doctor, we have reaſon to believe what you would have done, from what we behold you do. For tho' Popery and Slavery are at our Doors, and each moment are ruſhing in upon us; and nothing but the Wiſdom of one

Woman

Woman ſtands between us and them, yet you ſtill retain your commendable Paſſive Principle, appear as unconcern'd as if you had Sworn to be a Foe to neither, are found to be as little alarm'd for the Church, as if you had thrown off its Cauſe as you have caſt off its Habit; and inſtead of crying out Slavery, Popery, do nothing but cry out the Play-Houſe, the Play-Houſe, with as much Fury as if you were afraid it ſhould contribute to the keeping them out.

But my dear Doctor, By the leave of your Modeſty, I muſt exalt your Glory to a higher pitch. When Queen *Elizabeth* died King *James* ſucceeded him; and among the Eminent Reformers of his Reign there was no talk of the Stage. Nay, on the contrary, to their ſhame be it ſpoken, that King and his Court appear'd to be infinitely delighted with Plays. And in his Viſits to the two Univerſities, Plays were the chief of his Entertainment. But what would we have Doctor; as the Education is, ſo is the Youth. And he had been tutour'd by old *George*, a Notorious Reformer, but a Notorious Playwright. For the Sot believ'd it ſeems that the *Drama* could contribute to the Reformation of Mankind.

To King *James* ſucceeded King *Charles* the Firſt; and then aroſe another Famous Reformer, *John Milton* by name, who not only left a Tragedy behind him, the Story of which he impiouſly borrow'd from the Bible, written to leave him without excuſe in his mature, nay declining Years, but has left a fine Encomium on *Shakeſpear*; has ſhewn an extraordinary eſteem for *Johnſon*; and among all the things that he thought fit to Reform, ſo far had prejudice laid hold of his Underſtanding, it never ſo much as came into his Head that the Stage was one of them.

But then about that time, Doctor, there aroſe a Reformer indeed, Brother *Pryn* of Illuſtrious Memory; a Perſon indeed of an *amazing* boldneſs. For to the fervency of his

Furious

Furious Spirit, Ruine and Reformation were all one. With theſe Zealot's Thoughts he ſet about Reforming the Church as well as the Stage; and by preparing the downfal of one made way for the Ruine of the other. 'Tis true, he loſt ſome part of himſelf in the Cauſe. But happy the Ears that were ſo loſt! How much happier than thoſe that ſtand pricking up daily at the Ribaldry of our Modern Comedies? I know, dear Doctor, under the Roſe, that you have the ſame Deſign, and that you will never leave off writing as long as there is left either a Prelate or Poet in *England*; or if you do condeſcend to admit of Biſhops, you will at leaſt ſuffer no ſuch Biſhops as have a Tang of the Stage, I mean no Swearing Prophane Biſhops, but ſuch whoſe Meek and Chriſtian Communication is only Yea and Nay.

As you have the ſame noble Deſign, may you find better Fortune, as you well deſerve. For he, my dear Doctor, was but a Type, of your more Excellent ſelf, tho' indeed an Illuſtrious Type. And he but anticipated in a cold and gloomy way, the very things that Fate had deſigned to be ſaid with Fire and Flame by you. He indeed overthrew but for a time the Church and Stage together. But may you with a more propitious Fate---. But hold!--- No Man, you know is able to tell into whoſe hands a Letter may fall.

Thus, Doctor the bleſſed Work of Reformation went on; and down went the Biſhops and the Stage together; but after they had lain for ſome time in the duſt were reſtor'd together, and with them the baniſh'd King.

And there are not People wanting, who believe, that the Reſtoring the Stage, was one of the Motives to the Reſtoring the baniſh'd King, for ſay they, the People of *England* were at laſt grown weary of a Naſty, Gloomy, Sullen, Fanatical Government, and began to long for their Pleaſures. How my dear Doctor? The reſtoring the

Stage

Stage was one of the Motives to reſtoring the baniſh'd King. Ah my dear Doctor, if you had but flouriſh'd in that Auſpicious Juncture; How happy would you have eſteem'd your ſelf to have been the Inſtrument of ſuppreſſing the Stage, only on purpoſe to ſee it reſtor'd with ſuch a Glorious Attendant.

Well! The King, the Biſhops and the Stage were reſtored together, and a long time flouriſh'd together, without any talk of reforming the Play-Houſes, much leſs of ſuppreſſing them. For the Merry Miniſters of that Happy Prince laugh'd at a Reformation. And even the former Miniſters of the Church at that time, among whom were certainly ſome of the greateſt Men that the Chriſtian World has produc'd; appear'd by no means to be ſo terribly alarm'd at the Entertainments of the Stage.

You your ſelf, I remember Doctor, were then at Years of Diſcretion; and yet with Paſſive Ears and Tongue, endur'd the Filth of *Epſom*-Wells, the Bawdy of the Soldier's Fortune, and the Beaſtlineſs of *Limber-Ham*. But the time of your Prophetick Miſſion it ſeems was not yet come, or perhaps you thought it improper to fall out with the Play-Houſes, before you had fallen out with the Government. But you have at laſt, to the wonder of the World, declar'd your ſelf, and we may ſay of you, what *Lucretius* ſaid of his ador'd *Epicurus*, Pardon the Compariſon, I beſeech you Doctor,

That you in Wit ſurpaſs Mankind as far,
As does the Midday Sun, the Midnight Star.

For what in the Beginning of the Reformation was never ſeen, neither by *Jewell*, nor *Ridley*, nor *Cranmer*, nor *Latimer*; nor was afterwards hardly ſo much as thought of, by the Judicious, the Penetrating, the Sagacious *Hooker*; nor what in this latter end of it, (as under the Roſe we

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ſweetly hope Doctor) has not been found out neither by *Wilkins* nor *Tillotſon*, who have ſhown ſo much Underſtanding and ſo much Judgment; as well by the force of their Invincible Arguments, as of their Clear, Chaſte, Noble and Maſculine Styles; What none of theſe have been able to find, you have plainly convinc'd the World of; that the Play-Houſe would bring all to ruine; O Miracle of boundleſs Sagacity! O Prodigy of Penetration! The late Arch-Biſhop was certainly a Man of as undoubted Probity, of as much Integrity, as ever liv'd in the World; nor was his Zeal and his Boldneſs in the cauſe of Virtue leſs; witneſs that Noble, that Intrepid Spirit, with which he appear'd againſt Popery, even in the moſt Dangerous times, when the Jeſuits us'd ſharp deciſive Arguments, and made nothing of cutting a Man's Throat out of Zeal to Confute his Doctrine; the late Archbiſhop, I ſay, Doctor, who had ſo much Boldneſs, as well as Zeal and Integrity, and who in the late Reign had ſo much Pow'r; never ſaw this dreadful Danger from Plays, which you have ſo plainly diſcover'd. * For if he had ſeen it, he would have prevail'd upon the late Queen to ſuppreſs them. He either foreſaw none of this Danger, or if he did, the good miſtaken Man, thought there would be more in going about to prevent it. An infallible ſign that he wanted your fore-ſight and your Sagacity. He look'd upon himſelf to be indiſpenſably bound in a double reſpect to Reform the Corruptions of the times. For he was both Head of the Church, and firſt Couſellour of State. And no Man knew better then that Judicious Prelate, that Corruptions of Manners are moſt pernicious both to Church and State. And no Man ever diſcover'd

* *There is ſomething in the Eleventh Volume of his Sermons againſt Plays, which I had not ſeen when this was Writ; but Mr. Collier has prevaricated vilely in the Quotation.*

more Zeal for the preſent Eſtabliſhment, both in Church and State. And yet poor Man with all his Underſtanding, and all his Zeal, he was ſo far deluded in this particular, that he never medled with theſe Nurſeries of Licenſe and Atheiſm. As many admirable Sermons as he left behind him, againſt the Vices and the Errors of the Times; I believe you will hardly find that he has mentioned the Play-Houſes with bitterneſs in them all. He left that part of Reformation for your ſublimer Prudence, and more Heroick Charity. Indeed the Concern that he had himſelf both in Church and State was ſo apparent, that perhaps he might fear that a violent endeavour to Reform our Theatres in him might look like Intereſt; and might perhaps imagine that the Work would be kindlier received, if it were carried on by one who cared not a Farthing either for Church or State.

And here Doctor give me leave to admire the Glory, or to ſpeak in your own Diviner Language, the *Meridian blaze of your myſterious Charity. 'Tis of an amazing ſize and brightneſs*, and our weak Eyes are dazled at it. For that you dear Doctor, who appear ſo extreamly Nice and Scrupulous, that you dare not ſo much as take an Oath to defend our Sovereign Lady and us, againſt our Mortal Enemies; you who are ſo over cautious that you dare not ſo much as hold any Communion with us, that you ſhould take up this extream concern for our Souls, that you ſhould be ſo violent for our Salvation, is beyond expreſſion wonderful. When I conſider that all who are engaged by Duty, are either Dumb or very cold in the Matter, while you are declaiming with ſo much fervour, with ſo much zeal, againſt the Diſorders of

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our Theatres, you who have nothing to do with the matter; I can never ſufficiently admire the exceſs of your Zeal, which is too high and too Heavenly to be comprehended by a Mortal.

I can only ſay, that 'tis a thouſand pities 'tis confin'd to ſo narrow a Sphere. But, alas! good Man, it is none of your fault that it is not more univerſal. For we have reaſon to be ſenſible, that if you were not reſtrain'd, by the apprehenſion of Brutal and Beaſtly Force, you would not fail to declaim with the ſame heat and the ſame bitterneſs againſt both Church and State.

This amazing brightneſs of your Charity, has drawn upon you the Envy of ſome good Men; has made you become the Hatred of Libertines, and the Jeſt and Scorn of Buffoons. I Doctor am your Champion againſt them all; and I have many a Bickering in your behalf, even with my moderate Friends; who are indeed for Reforming the Licentiouſneſs of the Stage, but are by no means for a ſuppreſſion of the Play-Houſes. Mr. *Collier* ſays one of them is too ſevere. He does not conſider the times that we live in. Theſe are not the Primitive Apoſtolical Times, but the laſt and Corrupt Ages of the World. The Capital of a great Kingdom muſt have Meetings for publick Pleaſure. If Mr. *Collier* is for pulling down Plays; let him name a more Harmleſs and Reaſonable diverſion to be Eſtabliſhed in the room of them. What would he have us always at our Devotion? Or does he expect that we ſhould be all Devout? Would he have Devotion a Mode and Faſhion, as it is in *France*. Where the Rake is as Devout as the Arch-Biſhop, the

Whore-maſter as the Monk, and the moſt inconſiderable Punk at *Verſailles*, as the moſt Glorious Madam *de Maintenon*. 'Tis true, ſaid he, there are things in ſome of our Plays, that I could heartily wiſh were out, but Mr. *Collier* is too rigid, too harſh, and out of all meaſure ſevere. He does not bear with the leaſt faults, and ſeems to have no Indulgence for Human frailty. Thus Doctor you were attack'd the other Day by a Friend of mine, and you ſhall ſee how I defended you.

Lord Sir, ſays I, you are the moſt miſtaken Man in the World. Mr. *Collier* is no ſuch Perſon as you imagine. He is a good natur'd, ſweet temper'd Man as lives. And will bear as far as any Man whatever. And as for your ſaying that he has no Indulgence for Human frailty, why 'tis a ſign that you don't know him. 'Tis true, he has taken a fatal averſion to the Play-Houſe; and he will down with it. We have all of us an averſion for ſome thing or other. And why ſhould you be ſo much concern'd for that *Rendevouz of Rakes and Strumpets?* But yet Mr. *Collier* has Indulgence enough for them too, any where but in the Play-Houſe. And where's the mighty hardſhip then upon them? Are there no places for them to aſſemble but there? Are there not Taverns, Brandy-Shops, Coffee-Houſes, Chocolate-Houſes, Gaming-Houſes for the Rakes, and Indian-Houſes, Muſick-Houſes, Bawdy-Houſes, either for Strumpets Solitary, or Strumpets and Rakes in Conjunction according as they pleaſe. Has Mr. *Collier* writ one Word for five Years together againſt any of theſe places? For Godſake what do you call want of Indulgence then? Is not every Coffee-Houſe in Town grown a Gaming-Houſe? May not

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we go every Hour of the Day into ſeveral of them, and ſee and hear twenty Fellows Swearing and Blaſpheming, and one ſurrounded by that horrid Crew.

Shaking with Bloody Oaths the Box,
And calling upon Plague and Pox
T' aſſiſt him.

Why, there they may Swear and be damn'd for all Mr. *Collier*. He troubles himſelf with Swearing no where but in the Play-Houſe? But what do you mean by Human Frailty? When People are wicked in earneſt that's ſomething. He has nothing to ſay againſt ſuch. But to be Vicious in Jeſt, to play the Fool with the Devil, to counterfeit Sin forſooth on pretence of decrying it, why theſe are *dreadful provocations, this is flaming, and outragious wickedneſs.* And wickedneſs, which he is poſitively and abſolutely reſolv'd that he will not endure.

Come, Come ſays he, I begin to be ſenſible of the matter. Mr. *Collier* is now declining in Years; and the Affairs of the World go not according to his Wiſhes. And Age and Diſappointments have ſowr'd his Blood, and made him looſe the reliſh of Sports and gay Diverſions. Once more ſaid I, you are the moſt miſtaken Man in the World; Mr. *Collier* is far from being a Foe to the gayeſt Sports and Paſtimes; But then he is for having thoſe who frequent them take the conſent and approbation of the *Nonjuring* Clergy along with them, who you know are *Perſons of Sobriety and Conduct*. He'll tell you, that the Sports that good Biſhop *Laud* appointed for the Sabbath, were not only ſafe but commendable. That for example, Cricket when

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it came to be ſo recommended, immediately became Canonical, Foot-Ball Orthodox, and Jugle-Cat, *Jure Divino.* But for the Layety to be ſo impertinent as to chuſe diverſions for themſelves; and particularly for the Ladies to believe that they have Capacities enough to Judge between right and wrong, and to diſtinguiſh Decency from what is not *Decorum*, he takes to be an Enormity that is never to be allow'd of in any Chriſtian Country.

The Play-Houſe ſaid I, is one of thoſe which Mr. *Collier* believes to be too Luſcious a Paſtime for the Layity. To ſee and to read Plays, he thinks is enough, for one of his Eſtabliſh'd Virtue. And it muſt be own'd, that he has read or ſeen more than any Perſon in *Chriſtendom.* As for the Layity leſs vigorous Diverſions may ſerve them. The Men may take a Game at Bowls in the Summer, and a Game at Whisk in the Winter. The Women in Winter may viſit their grave Relations, and in Summer Evenings may take a Boat to cool themſelves. * For as for the *Park*, he ſays, that is a place that *is too much frequented by Rakes and Strumpets. He does not mean, he ſays, that all the Company there are ſo; but this he may affirm he ſays, that ſcarce any Quarter is ſometimes ſo plentifully ſtock'd. Now who ſays Mr.* Collier, *would truſt his Health in a place of Mortality, or go to the Peſt-Houſe for Recreation.* Thus Mr. *Collier*, like a Perſon of Conduct and Sobriety, treats the Layity with the ſame Circumſpection, that a *Romiſh* Prieſt does his Congregation at high Maſs, who only delivers the Wafer to the People, and reſerves the Wine for himſelf.

* *The ſame Company for the moſt part that frequents the* Park *frequents the* Play-Houſe.

But

But Doctor I had almoſt forgot one thing, that I urg'd among the reſt in your Defence, and that was the Reaſon why you ſtick ſo cloſe to the Play-Houſe, and let ſome other *flaming* Vices alone, which he was pleaſed to enumerate. And that was that you took this way of proceeding, to be laying the Ax to the Deviliſh Root of the accurſed Branches, that the Play-Houſe was the undoubted Cauſe of all the Iniquity in the Nation; and that if we could but down with that, a ſuddain Reformation would follow among all ſorts of People. That Porters would no longer be Drunk with Belch. That Vigorous Captains would be Tilting no more at Handſome Drawers in Taverns, that loſing Gameſters would no more Blaſpheme, and my Lady *Dabcheeks* Baſſet-Bank would be immediately broke.

Theſe are the things that I have ſaid in your behalf to ſeveral of the Enemies of your Short View and Defence. I now come to tell you what has happen'd upon the receiving your Diſſwaſſive; tho' 'tis ſcarce three Hours ſince its arrival. Immediately upon the reading it, my Eldeſt Son *Jack* told me that he was perfectly ſatisfied that Plays were abominable; and taking his Hat, his Sword and his Cloak, went away for St. *James*'s. My Eldeſt Daughter *Suſan*, is gone to take a walk in the Garden, to Meditate there in the Dark; that ſhe may have the Arguments in Readineſs, by which ſhe ſays ſhe deſigns to Convert her Siſter. But my Younger Son *Charles* made ſome Objections, and ſo did my Daughter *Harriet*, which I here ſend you as well as I can recollect them, becauſe I know Doctor that you are able to anſwer them better than I can.

Sir,

'Sir, ſays *Charles*, I have promis'd my Lady *Freelove* to Day, to wait upon her to the Play, and ſo has my Siſter *Harriet*; but for the future I promiſe you to keep away, and ſo I dare ſay will my Siſter, if you will but anſwer ſome Objections that we have to make againſt Mr. *Colliers* Diſcourſes.

I know no Reaſon, why Mr. *Collier* ſhould pretend to meddle with our Diverſions. If he is really offended at Plays himſelf, in the name of God let him keep away, I know no body who is fond of his Company there. But ſince we don't pretend to oblige him to come, Why ſhould he preſume to oblige us to keep away?

If Mr. *Collier* is really offended at Play-Houſes, I would fain know how long he has been ſo, or what is the Reaſon that he did not write againſt them when he was Young. For the Stage was really then more Licentious than it is now. Since he forbore writing againſt them till he was Old, we humbly deſire that we may not leave them till we are Old. And then perhaps, we may have ſome natural or ſome politick Conſiderations that may oblige us to rail as much as he does.

How comes this Man to take up ſo much concern for us? Is it Chriſtian Charity, and a tender care for our Souls? I would fain ask him one Queſtion, Is not true Religion that which is chiefly neceſſary for the Salvation of Souls? If he ſays it is, Why then let me ask him another Queſtion. Is the Religion which we of the preſent Eſtabliſh'd Church of *England* profeſs the true one, or is it not? If it is, Why does not he hold Communion with us? If it is not, Why does not he ſet us right? Has he a concern for our Souls

Souls or not? If he has, Why does he not mind the main thing? If he has not, Why does he pretend to make us uneaſie, and ſet us together by the Ears about trifles?

Is it a concern for the State that makes him take up his Pen; becauſe perhaps he believes that the Corruptions of the Stage may prove of Dangerous Conſequence to the Government. But if he has that extream concern for it, Why does he not take an Oath to be true to it? Why does he not Abjure the Gentleman who dwells at St. *Germains*? He believes us Schiſmaticks, and he believes us Rebels, and takes no notice of the matter. But if we talk of going to a Play, the Man's Zeal grows flaming and outragious upon it. Certainly his is a very nice, and very extraordinary Charity!

But if he is offended at Plays, ſo much as he pretends, Why does he ſee them, why does he read them ſo much? Why ſhould he be ſo ridiculouſly conceited, and ſo ſpiritually proud, as to think that he can ſtand under Temptations, under which we muſt fall?

If he has ſo much averſion for Plays as he pretends, if they are ſo very horrible, Why has he read ſo many? Why has he done evil that good may come of it? If he really loves them, and they are not ſo abominable, Why has he writ againſt them? If he has writ againſt Plays that he loves, How comes it that he ſays nothing againſt the Church and State which he hates?

What Reaſon can be given for that, unleſs that he waits for his opportunity, which by ſetting us at variance about trifles; he hopes in ſome meaſure to haſten, or unleſs, while in the Face of the World he is Bombarding the Stage, he is diligently in private undermining the Church and the State?

In this Age of univerſal Tolleration, when Nonſenſe of every Sort and Size is tollerated, not only that Gloomy, Sullen, Lifeleſs Nonſenſe, which is to be heard at *Quakers* and *Anabaptiſt* Meetings, but that ſparkling ſpirited, fiery Fuſtian which is to be found in our Diſſwaſives; in an Age in which Schiſm it ſelf is tolerated, Hereſie is tolerated; nay, when Mr. *Collier*'s Jacobite Congregation is tollerated; in this Age of univerſal tolleration for Hypocriſie and Nonſenſe, Shall we ſuffer an Inquiſition to be ſet up, for Wit, and Senſe and Pleaſure?

We are willing to have all the Indulgence in the World, for the Errors and Frailties of our fellow Creatures; and tho' we may believe ſome of them Schiſmaticks, believe ſome of them Hereticks, yet we are not for Reforming them againſt their Wills, nor ſaving them out of Malice. And we thought we might have hop'd, at leaſt that the Government might have hop'd, that at the ſame time that it Indulges ſome of them, not only in different ways of Worſhip, but ways which are diſagreeable, and ſome of them prejudicial to it, and ways which neither are, nor were, nor never will be tollerated in any other Kingdom of *Europe*; we thought, I ſay, that the Government might have hop'd that theſe very Perſons would have born with a Diverſion, which is Eſtabliſh'd by

by that, and which is not only protected by each of the Governments of the moſt conſiderable Kingdoms in *Europe*, but which has had always the allowance of publick Authority in the moſt flouriſhing Nations; and has been believed by them all to be the fitteſt Entertainment that can be allow'd by publick Authority. At a time when the Government has ſhewn ſo much Indulgence for them; might it not be expected that they ſhould ſhew ſome Regard for that, and not demand with furious Clamours, the ſuppreſſion of an Entertainment, Eſtabliſh'd by its Authority? For are not theſe Clamours againſt the Queen whoſe Servants the Players are? Is it not her that they attack thro' them? And may not we reaſonably fear, that as they begin this Reformation as they did that in Forty, ſo if they are ſuffer'd to go on, they will end it like that, and bring all things into Confuſion.

Pray Sir Conſider, Have we ſpent ſo much Blood and Treaſure in the Defence of our Liberties, And ſhall we ſuffer an Inquiſition to be ſet up for that which is the very Life and Soul of Liberty, and that is harmleſs Pleaſure; for 'tis for harmleſs Pleaſure we only contend. Let the Corruptions of the Stage be baniſh'd, but let the reſt remain. Yet at the ſame time it muſt be allowed that it is not Mr. *Collier*, who is a proper Judge of their Innocence or their Guilt. One wou'd Judge my Lord *Chamberlain* and the Maſter of the Revels have common Senſe to diſtinguiſh right from wrong. Is Mr. *Collier* a Perſon fit to be appeal'd to from them? And ſhall we not dare to go to a Play, till his Licenſe-Office is open? Shall we ſuffer our ſelves to be led by the Noſe by a Declamator, till we are brought into ſuch a condition that

we ſhall long for Slavery? How long ſhall we ſuffer Hypocriſie to paſs upon us for exact and ſcrupulous Virtue, Tropes for Reaſon, and Foppiſh Affectation for fine Language?

Shall we not only ſuffer an Inquiſition to be ſet up for Pleaſure, but as it were by univerſal implicit conſent permit his Diſciples to ſet up themſelves for Inquiſitors? When the Government of *England* pretends to give no Laws to the People, but by virtue of their own Election, and their own Conſent; Shall the Rabble erect themſelves into Legiſlators, and preſume to give Laws to the Queen her ſelf, and all the Nobility and Gentry of *England*, whether they will or no?

What has Mr. *Collier* to do with our Diverſions? Let him prove the Authority of his Miſſion to Preach up th' aboliſhing of that Heathen Invention a Play-Houſe. Cannot we meet together in a Play-Houſe, where we have no manner of Deſign upon Mr. *Collier*, without alarming him; and raiſing his Paſſions as he calls it to Combuſtion; when at the ſame time we have ſuffer'd him ſo long to meet in his ſeparate Congregations, where we reaſonably believe that he has a Deſign upon us. Certainly his is a pleaſant Charity, who in the very Hour of Death can Abſolve an Impenitent Traytor, and Damn a poor Fellow with Abſolute Power only for going to the Play-Houſe. What can he mean at this time of Day, when our Religion and Laws and Liberties are in the utmoſt Danger, from the Deſigns of *France* and *Rome* abroad, and a baſe Perfidious Party at Home, thus to divert Men from looking after their all,

all, by ſcaring them with ridiculous Preſages from the Corruptions of the Stage? If Corruptions contrary to the Queens knowledge have crept into our Theatres, and Corruptions too Enormous to be born by his ſcrupolous Virtue; Why did he not as his Loyalty oblig'd him to do, humbly Petition her Majeſty to Redreſs them, inſtead of making uſe of the Licentiouſneſs of the Preſs, to raiſe Seditious Clamours againſt her Conduct to the People?

It muſt be acknowledg'd there are Corruptions which are crept into our Theatres, for into what Human Inventions will not Corruptions creep, ſince it is plain that they inſenſibly creep into Religion which is of Divine Eſtabliſhment. But 'twould be a Monſtrous Concluſion, that becauſe of the Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, Reveal'd Religion ought to be ſuppreſſed, and Men to turn Deiſts or Atheiſts.

'Tis true, there are paſſages in ſeveral of our Plays, which I could heartily wiſh were out. But neither do I ſee a quarter ſo many as Mr. *Collier* does, nor do I look upon thoſe which I do ſee, thro' his magnifying opticks. The long view that he has taken of Smutt, as he very quaintly calls it, in his ſhort view of the Stage, puts me in mind of a *Dutch* Groteſy that is at my Lady *Freeloves*; where there is an Antick Frier who has caſt off his Frock, Squinting thro' a Microſcope at a Wanton Nun; who has thrown off her Petticoat. But Mr. *Collier* is miſtaken, if he thinks that to diſcern ſome certain matters, he has need of a Magnifying Glaſs. He has a Hawks, nay an Eagles Eye of his own at them;

and

and I dare ſay, can ſee as clearly and as diſtinctly through two Petticoats and a Smock, as *Euſtace Cummins*, of Immortal Memory, could Swear through a two Inch Board.

'Tis very true Sir, as I obſerved before, that there are ſeveral things in our Comedies, which I could wiſh had been left out; and there are particularly ſome Bawdy paſſages in them, which I wiſh the Authors had had more reſpect for the Audience in general, and for the fair Sex in particular, than to have inſerted in them. But does he think our Virtue ſo very weak, either the Ladies or the Gentlemen's, that we cannot give them a tranſitory hearing without being Debauch'd by them, while his it ſeems is ſo very ſtrong, that he can dwell for Months upon them, and make a full Collection of them, a Collection which has taught ſeveral of our Ladies more Bawdy in two Hours, than they would have learn'd in ſo many Years at the Play-Houſe? Does he believe that no body ought to entertain them obſcenely but himſelf? Or does he pretend to Erect a Monopoly for Bawdy; to retail it to his Stationers as oft as his occaſions require? 'Tis true, there are Corruptions which have crept into our Theatres, and theſe Corruptions ought to be Reformed, but therefore ought the Stage to be ruin'd? Is not the Corruption of the Stage an evident proof of its Original Goodneſs, ſince what is Originally Wicked never can be Corrupted? But in what Human Converſation is there not Corruption?

Does

Does Mr. *Collier* really believe that there is no Swearing in Gaming-Houſes? No Intriegues at *India* or Chocolate-Houſes? No Lying, and no Sharping in Coffee-Houſes, no Beaſtly Leudneſs at Muſick-Houſes, and Bawdy-Houſes? If he believes that theſe Places are Guilty of the Crimes imputed to them, Why does he not Preach to them, which have a great deal more occaſion for Reformation than the Play-Houſe? For in moſt of them you have Venom without Preſervative, but the Play-Houſe carries or ſhould carry the Antidote with the Poiſon. If Mr. *Collier* has ſeen any of theſe places, as 'tis hard to believe that one of his Experience ſhould not have been at ſome of them; methinks he ſhould be convinc'd that by correcting of them, he would begin with the Head, whereas now he but pleaſes and tickles Corruption, by catching Reformation by the Tail. A little common Senſe may ſerve to convince a Man, that the Reforming the Stage would never Reform the Town, but the Reforming the Town would certainly Reform the Stage.

What is the Reaſon then that Mr. *Collier* neglecting the Vices of the Town, keeps ſuch a Buſtle at thoſe of the Stage. Why becauſe it is not his deſign or buſineſs to Correct or Reform any thing? His only buſineſs is to ſet up himſelf. To erect an obſcure Schiſmatical Parſon into a Saint of the firſt Magnitude. To paſs for a Man of more Sanctity than all the Biſhops, and of more Diſcernment than all the Miniſters of State. His buſineſs is not to Correct and Reform, but to amuſe, to puzzle, to make a Noiſe and a Party; to make the Stage the Apple of Diſſention, to ſet us at untimely Variance at this dangerous

dangerous Juncture. He has Experience enough of the World, to know that a Noiſe and a Party is not to be made, by barely attacking of Vice. For by doing that he would oblige only the Vertuous. And alas they are but few; and a Silent, a Modeſt and an Humble Party. But by attacking the Stage, he obliges the Vitious too, and they are Numerous, and Pert, and Arrogant, and Noiſie and Tumultuous. 'Tis true, the Virtuous are Enemies to the Vices and Corruptions of the Stage. But only the Guilty and the Hypocrites are Enemies to a Stage Reform'd, becauſe a Stage Reform'd would be Enemies only to them. When Mr. *Collier* began to Write his ſhort View, he deſigned to oblige only the firſt, for in the beginning of that Book, his intent is plainly only to Reform the Stage. But then afterwards he Wiſely conſidered that the obliging the Virtuous would not do his buſineſs. They are not enough to cry up their Champion, and bring him into Reputation. But if he appear'd an Enemy to the Stage it ſelf, and attempted to Deſtroy it inſtead of Reforming it, Why then he would oblige all the Doubty Hectors in Virtue, a numerous multitude of falſe Branes, who would infallibly ſtand Buff for him, and be his Bully Backs on occaſion. He knew of old the Catalogue of thoſe who were Enemies to Satyr, and he knew that all the Enemies to Satyr, were ſo to the *Engliſh* Stage.

Sunt,

Sunt, quos genus hoc minime juvat, ut pote plures
Culpari dignos, quemvis media erue Turba,
Aut ob avaritiam, aut miserâ ambitione Laboret.
Hic nuptarum insanit a moribus, hic puerorum,
Hunc capit Argenti splendor, stupet Albius ære;
Hic mutat merces surgente à sole ad eum quo
Vespertina tepet Regio, quin per mala preceps
Fertur uti pulvis collectus turbine; nequid
Summa Deperdat metuens aut ampliet ut Rem,
Omnes hi metuunt versus, odere poetas;

I know Sir, that you understand the Original very well, and therefore I will not pretend to Interpret *Horace* to you litterally, but I desire your leave to make some Observations upon him by way of Paraphrase, which will set his Sense in a clearer light, and convince you of this Important Truth, that all who would appear what they are not, are mortal Enemies to Comedy, because the Comick Poet is perpetually upon the hunt for Originals; and every one would be glad to play the Fool or the Knave in quiet, without being singled from the Herd.

Sir, I shall at present trouble you, but with two of these Characters of *Horace*, not only because I am sensible that I begin to tire you, but for Reasons which I shall hint to you anon, but those two Characters I desire that I may set before you with the same additions, with which time has transmitted them to us, and by altering them made them Modern.

The First is he, *Qui ob avaritiam laborat.* A Gogling, Snarling, Groaning, Praying Rogue; though at the same time an Usurer and an Extortioner, a Fellow so notoriously given to cheating, that he defrauds even himsef of Necessaries, who can Dine on a Prayer as Sir *John Denham* says, and Sup on an Exhortation, one who makes a Stalking-Horse of Religion, and lyes sculking behind it with no other purpose than to draw Wild-Geese within his Reach.

The other Sir, is he; *Qui mutat merces, &c.* A Biggotted Stock-Jobber, or a Fanatick Monopolizer, a Fellow that devoutly calls

up his Family to Repetition on Sundays; and as devoutly makes them his Tools to Smuggle and Cheat the Queen on the Week-Days. A Perſon who will ſtick at no manner of Villany, but is kindly contented to be damn'd, only that his great Boobily Boy, may get half a dozen Claps, half a ſcore Surfeits, loſe half his Eſtate at the Groom-Porters, be cheated of the other half by Sharpers who are under Spur-Leathers; and Jog on to the Devil a little more gayly than his Father. In the mean time this good natur'd Father leads a moſt Exemplary Life. In the Morning while his Servants are buſie at the Water ſide, he walks about the City, to pull down Play-Bills, Cheat thoſe who deal with him, to cauſe all the Beggars that he finds in his way to be Whipt; though atthat very time he is going to augment the Number of them, to viſit Watch-Men, Head-Boroughs, and Petty Conſtables, and charge them that if they find any Handſome Whore upon their Watch, they ſhould bring her to him the next Morning; and leaſt the Conſtable or the Watch ſhould have a wambling to her themſelves, for ſuch things he remembers have been formerly done, he reads a long Lecture to them againſt Concupiſence, and then goes Home, and gravely Dines with his Family. The Afternoon he paſſes in walking from Tavern to Tavern, in which he Drinks above Twenty Nipperkins, in as many ſeveral Kitchens, to ſee that there is no Swearing, and no Prophaneneſs there, but that People as he thinks it behoves good Chriſtians, get Devoutly and Religiouſly Drunk; till growing more and more inflam'd with Canary and Zeal, and being full of them both, he is obliged at the laſt to Diſembogue himſelf, which he does of each, by Spewing and Preaching in turns. And after he has thus performed his Duty to the Publick; and Fortified himſelf for the better performance of private Duties, he goes home like a Good Man, to Faſt and Pray with his Family; I ſay to Faſt Sir, not out of Covetouſneſs or Superſtition, but that he may ſecure the Chaſtity of his Daughters by mortifying the Old Man in them, and the Youths of his Family.

But Sir, by your ſhaking your Head, and your biting your Lip, I am to believe you miſtake me. I am not here for making a Satyr upon the City. I know very well that this City is the only true and

ſolid

ſolid Foundation of the *Engliſh* Strength. Nor am I ſuch a Fool as to believe that Senſe or Honour are confined to place. I am my ſelf acquainted with a great many Citizens, who are very Eſtimable Members of the Commonwealth; I know ſeveral among them who are not only Men of Senſe and Honour, but of Wit and Pleaſantry. I know ſeveral of them, whoſe true Zeal for Religion, is ſhewn by all that engaging Charity, that atractive Humility, and lovely Meekneſs, which are the only ſigns of a good Chriſtian. And for ſuch true Chriſtians whether they may belong to the Church or Meeting-Houſe, no Man has a greater reſpect than I have; who Judge of Mens Devotion, not by the Errors of their Underſtandings, but by the Sincerity of their Hearts. But every Hypocrite, to talk in Mr. *Colliers* extraordinary Dialect, is the Diſpleaſure and the Diſeaſe of my Eyes. I Hunt him, as *Boileau* ſays, as a Dog does his Game, and as ſoon as ever I ſmell him, I bark immediately. And with ſubmiſſion to you Sir, I believe I am in the Right of it, and that the Hypocrites in Chriſtian Warfare, ought to be more ſeverely handled, than a Strumpet or a Libertine, as we treat an open declar'd Enemy leſs rigorouſly than a Spy. That the number of Hypocrites in the City is very great, the Men of true Devotion there will be the firſt to acknowledge. 'Tis to the Level of them that Mr. *Collier* has particularly Writ: Every thing in his ſhort View, his Defence and his Diſſwaſive appears to be adapted to them; the Sophiſtry of his Deductions, the Equivocating and Prevaricating of his Citations, the Finicalneſs of his Language, and the Phariſaical Arrogance of his Zeal. By gaining of theſe he knew he ſhould compaſs both the ends, for the which he Writ. The firſt of which was that he ſhould engage a numerous Party to make a Noiſe and to Bully for him; of which he did not fail.

For is it notoriouſly known that in the late Reign, ſeveral Perſons of the forementiond Stamp, who pretended to meet together for the ſupport of the Laws and the Government, diſcharg'd their Malice in a publick manner againſt ſeveral Gentlemen, of known Loyalty and *Engliſh* Principles; only that they might do an acceptable thing to a Man whom they knew to be a Mortal Enemy to the preſent Eſtabliſhment.

The other end that Mr. *Collier* probably propos'd to himſelf, by exaſperating the Noiſie and Clamorous part of the City againſt the Theatres, might be to Animate them againſt the People of Quality, whoſe preſence ſupports them, and the Court whoſe Authority protects them. That that this is no Chimerical Conjecture, may be thought by any one who takes a ſhort view of Mr. *Colliers* Principles. For from this proceeding he might eaſily forſee one of theſe two Conſequences. For upon theſe Clamours and Outcries, either the Play-Houſes would be ſuppreſs'd, orthey would be protected. If they were ſuppreſs'd, he eaſily ſaw the Gentry would be diſoblig'd, and that would be a pretty handſome ſteptowards ſome farther Reformations, and Alterations. But if upon theſe Clamours they were not ſuppreſs'd, why then he had a great deal of Reaſon to hope that the City would grow ſullen and ſower. And if their being out of Humour was ofſuch dangerous Conſequence in the Days of Brother *Pryn* of bleſſed Memory; when the Court appeared to have ſo little occaſion for them, he believ'd that it might be of greater Moment now, when he knew that by the Neceſſity of the Times, the Court was oblig'd to Demand theiraſſiſtance frequently.

Sir, you have often told me with extream goodneſs, that you requir'd no Obedience to any Commands that you laid upon us, if they did not appear to be Reaſonable; Becauſe, God himſelf, you have been pleaſed to tell us, required only our Reaſonable Service. But Sir, Can you believe it Reaſonable, that I ſhould be of another Man's Opinion againſt my own Sentiments, when it appears ſo plainly that he is not of his own? For Sir, Can any thing be more evident than that Mr. *Collier* is moved to Write againſt the Stage by another Motive than that which he pretends. His Motive perhaps may be Human Policy, but it can never be Charity, or perhaps 'tis Spleen or Covetouſneſs, or Pride, or Arrogance, or Fear. I ſay, Fear Sir. For has not Mr. *Collier* Reaſon to apprehend the Stage as well as Hypocrites of the forementiond Characters? For is it not evident, that at the ſame time that he is ſetting up for a Firſt Rate Reformer, he has ſhewn to the World, that he is but a Fifth-Rate Comedian? And while he pretends to condemn Acting upon the Stage, is Acting a Part upon the Stage of the World, ſo awkardly

and

and ſo ridicuouſly, that all who are furniſh'd with Common Senſe, have found it to be Comedy? For whom he does he pretend to Reform? Is it not the People, as I obſerv'd before, whoſe Religion he abhors, and and whoſe Government he hates? And does not he know very well that by Reforming our Manners, he would run Counter to his own Deſigns and Wiſhes; becauſe Reformation of Manners would confirm the preſent Eſtabliſhment, both in Church and State? and can he then really deſign to Reform us? But how does he propoſe to himſelf, to bring this about? Why not by ſuppreſſing Vice, but the Stage that Scourges and expoſes it. For he meddles not with that Vice that is the World, let it be never ſo *flaming and outragious.* For example, the crying Sin of *England* next to Hypocriſie, at this time is Gaming; a Sin that is attended with ſeveral others, both among Men and Women, as Lying, Swearing, Perjury, Fraud, Quarrels, Murders Fornication, Adultery. Has not Gaming done more miſchief in *England* within theſe laſt Five Years than the Stage has done in Fifty? For when Women have loſt vaſt Summs at Play, which they have been afraid to own to their Fathers or Husbands, Have they not often been known to pay them after a ſhameful way? How can the moſt Inveterate Biggot pretend that Gaming is fomented or encouraged by the Stage? Muſt he not on the contrary he oblig'd to own, that it is Cenſur'd and Corrected by it? What is the Reaſon then that Mr. *Collier* neglecting ſo Important and ſo Dangerous a Vice, againſt which no body has ſaid one Word; reſerves all his Rage for the Play-Houſe? And takes an occaſion from the late Tempeſt to threaten us with ſome Terrible Vengeance from Heaven, if it is not immediately ſuppreſt. Can any thing be more ridiculous than this from him? For does not he wiſh for the greateſt Vengeance that Heaven can ſend down upon us? Can any Vengeance be inflicted on a Proteſtant and free People more terrible than Slavery and Idolatry? Is not the late Tempeſt, though dreadful in it ſelf, yet a very trifle compared to thoſe? Tho' the late Storm ſhould return, *and nature ſhould once more appear to be in her laſt Agony, and the World be Ready to expire*; would not every one, who has Noble *Engliſh* Principles, chuſe rather to ſee it Periſh, than to loſe his Religion and his Liberty? Beſides, Has the late Tempeſt any thing to do with the buſineſs of the Play-Houſe? What can Mr. *Collier* mean then by threatning us with terrible Vengeance, at the ſame time that he wiſhes it; and by engaging us in frivilous and groundleſs Diſſentions, endeavours all that he can to bring it on us at the very time that he pretends to avert it?

If Mr. *Collier's* Zeal were ſincere; he would neither go about to frighten us with things, which it is plain that he is not afraid of; nor neglecting more dangerous Crimes would he attack the leſs. Beſides it is plain that he himſelf has not that Opinion of the Stage, into which he would Fool

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and Delude us. For if the cauſe of the Stage were ſo bad as he would make us believe; or if it were out of Charity that he attack'd it, What need he make uſe of notorious falſhood to decry it? 'Tis a pleaſant Charity that engages a Man to be damn'd himſelf to Reform others. Beſides, What occaſion has Truth to have recourſe to Falſhood, which may ſometimes indeed ſupport Falſhood, but muſt always to diſcerning Eyes render Truth ſuſpected.

You know Sir, that it is eaſie for me to prove, that in this ſhort Letter addreſt to you Mr. *Collier*, has recourſe to Falſhood. For can any thing be more plain, even from the Artifice of his Addreſs to you? Does not he here, to make the World believe, thot he has the *Countenance of Figure and Fortune*, Palm you upon the Town for a Perſon of Quality, who are only a private Gentleman?

If Mr. *Collier* is mov'd by Charity to exclaim thus loudly againſt the Stage, let me ask him one Queſtion, Who are the Perſons whom he deſigns to Reform? They who never come to a Play-Houſe, methinks ſhould have no occaſion for his Corrections. If his Deſign is on thoſe who come thither; Why does he not inſinuate himſelf into their Affections, by the Meekneſs and Humility of his Expreſſions, and the Atractive Language of Charity? Why has he recourſe to ſuch Preſumptuous Arrogance, as juſtly renders him the Averſion of ſome, and the Scorn of others? with him an Audience which you very well knew Sir, is often one of the moſt Venerable and Awful Aſſemblies that can be any where found, is an Aſſembly of Rakes and Strumpets; Buffoons are the Poets, and the Players Libertines; Does he believe that ſuch Language is proper to work upon theſe People; or to provoke them and exaſperate them, and render them deaf to Argument or Perſwaſion.

Beſides there is ſomething in Mr. *Collieers* Style with which Truth is almoſt incompatible, and that is Affectation, which is always falſe. Truth is plain and ſimple, and natural, and as ſhe can have no defect in her is but hid by Ornament. 'Tis true when we convey her to the Underſtanding by the Paſſions, we ſometimes give her Ornament. But then that Ornament muſt be in nature and conſequently true. But Affectations always falſe and can no more conſiſt with truth than darkneſs can with light. What I have obſerved of Man in general, my be ſaid of Writers; That Affectation is a certain ſign in them of want of Sincerity, or of Underſtanding, and very often of both.

But Mr *Collier*'s is the moſt affected, moſt Foppiſh Style that ever I met with in Ancient or Modern Authors; of which I will undertake to convince any Impartial Man, if he is but a tolerable judge of writing.

But to return from Words to Things, I have not time enough to diſplay the perpetual Sophiſtry of his Inferences, or rather his no Inferences,

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for a Metaphor or an Allegory is with him an Argument, and ſo is often an Hyperbole. But I ſhall ſay a word of the more than Jeſuitical prevaricating in his Authorities. I ſhall only inſiſt upon two, the one of which he brings from Old, and the other from Modern *Rome*.

Pray Sir, Let me ſee Mr. *Collier*'s Letter; Ay, here the Authorities are: *The Republick of* Rome, *before* Julius Cæſar *ſtopt the building of a Theatre, being fully convinc'd, that this diverſion would bring in Foreign Vice, that the old* Roman *Virtue would be loſt, and the Spirits of the People Emaſculated.*

To prove this he refers his Reader to his Defence of the Short View. That is, he endeavours to ſupport the Sham which he puts upon the World now, by that which he put upon it five Years ago. 'Tis true after all, Mr. *Collier* ſpeaks the Truth here, but 'tis daſh'd and brew'd with a Vengeance. 'Tis true, the *Romans* did ſtop the building of a Theatre, before the Time of *Cæſar*. But would he paſs this upon us for one Act of the *Roman* People, or for their conſtant Senſe? If for their conſtant Senſe, their conſtant practiſe proves that it was quite contrary. If for one Act, of what validity can that poſſibly be againſt their conſtant Senſe?

Is not Mr. *Collier* now a moſt ſhameful Hyocrite? For does not he know that the *Romans* had the higheſt veneration for Plays imaginable? Is not every School-Boy, who has read *Terence* convinc'd of it? Do not his Comedies tell us by their Titles that they were part of the Religion of that People? That they were all acted at their Funeral Ceremonies, or at the Feſtivals of their Gods?

That which he has ſaid of Q *Elizabeth* is another Pious Fraud, a meer Religious Banter. But I know that you who are ſo well acquainted with the Hiſtory of our Nation muſt be already ſatisfied of it.

But the Pope has lately ſhut up the Theatres in *Italy*? Can any thing be more abſurd than this? Has the Pope lately ſhut up the Bawdy-Houſes? Or does he continue to lay a Tax upon Sin, and to give them Spiritual Licenſes? 'Tis very certain he does. What then would Mr. *Collier* conclude from this; that the Government here ought to Licenſe Bawdy-Houſes, and to Suppreſs Play Houſes, becauſe the Pope takes the ſame Method?

I think Sir, I have made it plainly appear, that Mr. *Collier* is one who has Reaſon to be afraid of Theatres, and therefore to hate them. For he is one of thoſe with a Vengance who endeavour to appear what they are not. And tho' now a Days a Prieſt is not ſuffer'd to be brought upon the Stage, yet I queſtion whether he is to be regarded as a Prieſt, who wears a Sword of five Foot long, and a Perruke of three, and goes about Reforming in the ſame Habit, in which the *French* Dragoons are at this very Juncture Piouſly Reforming the *Cevennois*.

Thus Sir, I deſire that I may have leave to continue to be a Friend to our Theatres, ſince I have clearly ſhewn that Mr. *Collier* is not from his

Heart

Heart their Enemy; eſpecially ſince I am convinc'd that the Play-Houſes with all their Immorality and with all their faults, may be inſtrumental to the Reforming ſo Profligate an Age as this.

Thus Doctor, I have ſent the ſumm of the Objections which were made by *Charles*, to which I deſire your Anſwer, that the Boy who is Hot, and Opinionated, may not run on in his Error.

As ſoon as he had done, I took *Harriet* to task, Daughter ſaid I, You ſee the Caſe is very hard upon you and the reſt of your Sex, for thus the Doctor puts it, *Either the Ladies are pleas'd with the Indecencies of the Stage or they are not. If they are pleas'd, 'tis a hard Imputation on their Virtue. If they are not pleaſed, 'twill be enquired why they come there.* For his part, *He confeſſes that he has not Logick enough to diſengage you.*

While I ſpoke this, I perceived ſome great alteration in her; you would have ſworn, *her Imagination had been ſhock'd, her Averſion put into a fit, and that ſhe underwent much Fatigue of Fancy and Mortification.* To ſpeak more vulgarly, the Blood began to ſpring up into her Face, her little Breaſts began to heave, and ſhe darted a frown that made her awful ev'n to me her Father. He wants Logick to diſengage us, (ſaid ſhe, with a diſdainful Air, after I had juſt repeated thoſe very Words,) why, then he ſhall find that I have more than he has, and that I who have not yet reach'd my Seventeenth Year, am able to make a very juſt Apology in behalf of my ſelf, and all the Women of Condition in *England*, whom he has ſo baſely affronted. Tho' we are not pleas'd with the Indecencies or Immoralities of Plays, yet notwithſtanding that we frequent them, becauſe ſome Diverſion is abſolutely neceſſary for us, and becauſe perhaps ev'n Modern Plays with all the faults imputed to them, are the moſt Innocent of the Diverſions which this Town affords.

The Diverſions that the Town affords, are chiefly reduc'd to four, 1. Gaming. 2. Muſick-Meetings. 3. Balls and Meetings for Dancing. 4. Going to Plays. Now of all theſe, I am apt to believe that Plays are the moſt Innocent, for the following Reaſons. They raiſe the Paſſions only to correct them, whereas the others raiſe 'em merely for the ſake of inflaming 'em. The Plays, and more eſpecially Tragedies inſtruct us in Virtue, which the other Diverſions do not. They improve us in Lawful Innocent Knowledge, which in ſome meaſure ſupplies the want of Education in our Sex. They form our Language, and poliſh our Minds, and ſo Capacitate us, when we come to Marry to engage and endear our Husbands to us. For we every Day ſee that only Fools are conſtant long to Fools. Sir, in ſhort the Caſe is thus. Diverſions the Ladies of a great Metropolis muſt have. I have particulariz'd the ſeveral Diverſions which this Town affords. All the Danger, and all the Temptation which this Judicious Perſons ſuppoſes to be at the Play-Houſe, are really in all the other Diverſions, which have

none

none of the advantages that may be reap'd from Tragedies, for the Improvement either of our Virtue or Knowledge. Why then would this mighty Reformer have us leave Plays for them? Would he have us have no Diverſion, or would he have us make choice of thoſe which have the moſt Temptation?

True Sir, there are paſſages in ſome of our Plays which I could heartily wiſh were out. But does he think the Virtue of the Ladies who frequent Play-Houſes, is ſo very weak, as to be o'erthrown by the Luſciouſneſs, as he calls it, of a Scriblers *Double Entendres*. What have ſo many great Examples as we find on the Stage, ſo many Noble and Generous Sentiments, ſo many accompliſh'd patterns of Virtue; Have all theſe no manner of pow'r to rouze, to ſtrengthen and inflame our Virtue; and ſhall two or three wretched Equivocalls, three or four miſerable *Double Entendres* have the force to corrupt us?

If any of my Sex happen to find themſelves ſo infirm, as this worthy Reformer appears to own that he is; if two or three ridiculous double meanings have ſtrength enough to undo them, in ſpight of thoſe exalted Heroick Characters, which in my Opinion ſhould be enough to fix our Affections on Virtue to that degree, that nothing that we meet with abroad in the World ſhould have the pow'r to move us; if any of my Sex are ſo infirm, let them in God's name keep away from our Theatres. But I find no ſuch ſcandalous weakneſs about me. I can deſpiſe a Fool who thinks to entertain me with his ſordid playing on Words, but at the ſame time can be entertain'd with Wit and good Senſe, and more with the Innocence of true writ Humour, and I can be both pleas'd and mov'd, with the excellent Scenes of an Inſtructive Tragedy: Does this Judicious Perſon really believe that the Converſations which we find in the World are Virtue and Purity all. The Food of the Mind like that of the Body is not all of it fit for Nouriſhment. But ſtrong Virtue like ſtrong Nature knows how to diſcern and ſeparate, to reject the bad, to aſſimulate the good by which it is fed and ſupported. If any of my Sex have the ſcandalous weakneſs to have their Virtue and their Honour endanger'd by the Folly of *Double Entendres*, I would adviſe them to take their leaves of the Play-Houſe. But at the ſame time I would adviſe Mr. *Collier* to perſwade his Noble Patrons of the Reforming Club, to erect a Proteſtant Nunnery for them, for nothing leſs can ſecure them. For they who are found ſo ſtrangely weak as to be warm'd by a meer Painted Fire, How can they ever ſtand againſt the real Flames of Love?

How many extraordinary Women may *England* boaſt of, ſince Plays were introduc'd among us? Among whom are three of the greateſt Queens that ever the World produc'd; and all of them took Delight in Plays: How

many Ladies of Inferiour Rank have frequented, and ſtill frequent 'em, who yet in proportion are fam'd for every Virtue. What does this Charitable Perſon believe of our Mothers, our Aunts and Grandmothers? Does he believe them Adultreſſes all becauſe they frequented the Play-Houſe? But you Sir have Juſtice to believe better. You knew my Mother true to your Bed, as ſhe was dear to your Arms. And I beſeech you to have the goodneſs to believe, that tho' like her I frequent our Theatres, I will be always Heir to her Virtue, as I am to her likeneſs.

This Doctor was the ſum of what *Harriet* ſaid before ſhe went to the Play. News is juſt now brought me that ſhe is come back from that horrid place, and is gone with *Charles* to my Lady *Freelovet*, and that her Ladyſhip has ſent for me——

Ah dear Doctor, Let me ſee you to morrow, to receive ſome Conſolation from you. For here have happen'd two of the moſt unfortunate things in the World. For News is brought me from *Piccadilly* that *Jack* has loſt a Thouſand Pound at Picket, and *Suſan* who went into the Garden forſooth to Meditate, tho' ſhe went out as black as a Raven, being in Mourning for her Great Aunt, yet as I hope for Mercy the Jade is return'd as white and as powder'd, as if ſhe had been hard at work in a Bolting-Houſe. So that I could wiſh that for this one Night, they had both been with *Harriet* and with *Charles* at the Tabernacle of the Wicked.

I am, Dear Doctor, Yours, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE I writ this, I have ſeen a Letter written by you, tho' without Name to *Mrs*--- She deſigns to return you an Anſwer, as ſoon as ſome little Affairs will give her leave. In the mean while ſhe ſays, that in the hurry in which your Letter ſeems to be Writ, you overlook'd the Firſt part of the Paſſage which you quoted from Doctor *Tillotſon*, and therefore ſhe deſir'd me to Tranſcribe it, and to ſend it you with this, which in Obedience to her Commands I have done, and it is as follows, *Tillot. Serm.* vol. 11. *To ſpeak againſt them* (viz. *Plays*) *in general, may be thought too Severe, and that which the preſent Age cannot ſo well brook, and would not perhaps be ſo juſt and reaſonable, becauſe it is very poſſible they might be ſo fram'd, and governed by ſuch rules, as not only to be innocently diverting, but inſtructing and uſeful; to put ſome Vices and Follies out of Countenance, which cannot perhaps be ſo decently reprov'd, nor ſo effectually expos'd and corrected any other way.*

FINIS.

Page 1. in the Date, for *Jan.* 27th. read *Jan.* the 1ſt.